

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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ALBANY

U R G E N T

FIRST LEAD POWERS

WASHINGTON, FEB. 28 (AP)—A SPECIAL BOARD OF INQUIRY HAS FINISHED ITS QUESTIONING OF U-2 PILOT FRANCIS GARY POWERS, HIGH GOVERNMENT SOURCES SAID TODAY, AND POWERS MAY APPEAR BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES AND A NEWS CONFERENCE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

THE TIMING OF THE POWERS' APPEARANCES ON CAPITOL HILL AND BEFORE NEWSMEN STILL IS UNCERTAIN.

MEANWHILE, THE 32-YEAR-OLD FLIER WILL BE KEPT BEHIND A WALL OF SECRECY A BIT LONGER, ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SAID THAT HE IS A FREE AGENT AND CAN COME AND GO AS HE PLEASES. THEY SAID, TOO, THAT IT WILL BE UP TO POWERS HIMSELF TO DECIDE WHETHER HE WISHES TO HOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE, BUT THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON THIS PROBABLY WILL COME THROUGH THE WHITE HOUSE.

THIS IS THE SITUATION AS OUTLINED BY ONE ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMAN:

THE SPECIAL BOARD OF INQUIRY THAT LOOKED INTO THE POWERS CASE HAS FINISHED ITS TASK AND TURNED OVER ITS REPORT YESTERDAY AFTERNOON TO JOHN B. MCCONE, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY. MCCONE NOW IS REVIEWING IT AND IT IS HE WHO WILL MAKE THE FINAL DECISION ON WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT POWERS, IF ANYTHING.

THE INQUIRY BOARD WAS REPORTED YESTERDAY TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, POWERS HANDLED HIMSELF ABOUT AS WELL AS HE COULD HAVE WHEN HIS HIGH-FLYING PHOTOGRAPHIC RECONNAISSANCE PLANE WAS DOWNED INSIDE RUSSIA MAY 1, 1960. POWERS WAS TRIED IN MOSCOW AND SENT TO PRISON ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES. HE WAS FREED FEB. 10 IN AN EXCHANGE FOR COL. RUDOLF ABEL, SOVIET MASTER SPY CONVICTED BY THE UNITED STATES.

MCCONE WILL BE TESTIFYING TODAY AND TOMORROW IN CLOSED SESSIONS BEFORE THE SENATE AND HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEES. THE COMMITTEES WILL DETERMINE WHETHER THEY WANT TESTIMONY FROM POWERS. THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ALREADY HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WANTS TO QUESTION THE FLIER, PROBABLY NEXT WEEK.

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GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SAY THAT POWERS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS UNTIL AFTER CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES HAVE FINISHED QUIZZING HIM. SO APPARENTLY THERE COULD BE NO NEWS CONFERENCE UNTIL SOME TIME NEXT WEEK AT THE EARLIEST.

PRESUMABLY MCCONE WILL FINISH REVIEWING THE INQUIRY BOARD'S REPORT WITHIN A MATTER OF HOURS, SINCE IT IS ASSUMED HE WILL HAVE DONE SO IN ADVANCE OF HIS TESTIFYING ON CAPITOL HILL. THE FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD HAS NOT YET BEEN DISCLOSED, BUT THIS MAY BE DONE TOMORROW.

FOR THE TIME BEING THE HIGHEST OFFICIALS ARE WITHHOLDING ANY COMMENT ON WHETHER THE FLIER BELIEVES THAT POWERS FULFILLED HIS CONTRACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT KENNEDY SAID IN A NEWS CONFERENCE A WEEK AGO THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE AT THAT TIME HE HAD NOT DONE SO.

BUT KENNEDY WAS SAID NOT TO HAVE SEEN THE INQUIRY BOARD'S FINDINGS, AS OF THIS MORNING, NOR TO HAVE RECEIVED A REPORT ON THEM FROM MCCONE.